

# One potato, two potato: 'Mashed Library', two years in

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Mashed Library is both a movement and a series of unconferences<sup>1</sup>, organised by librarians and proudly self-identified 'shambrarians': non-librarians working in libraries. Mashed Library is about "bringing together interested people and doing interesting stuff with libraries and technology"<sup>2</sup>. The 'mashed' part of the name is derived from the notion of 'mashing together' data drawn from different sources to create library web applications greater than the sum of their constituent parts<sup>3</sup>.

The first Mashed Library or "mashlib" event took place in 2008, at Birkbeck, University of London. Since then, Mashed Library unconferences have sprung up in Bath, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Huddersfield (twice, thanks to the stalwart Dave Pattern of the University of Huddersfield), Lincoln and Liverpool. For his role in kick-starting the movement<sup>4</sup>, library consultant Owen Stephens has been awarded the tongue-in-cheek title "Father of Mashed Libraries" by mashlib regulars.

There is no committee and no permission is required: anyone can organise a Mashed Library event<sup>5</sup>, and the enthusiasm of people from a range of different library sectors (academic, public, commercial) has been an essential part of the movement's success. Mashlib events tend towards the very informal, and a vein of surrealist humour runs throughout. Since "Mash Oop North" in 2009, each event in turn has had its own punning nickname on the 'mash' theme.

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<sup>1</sup>Wikipedia. *Unconference* [Online]. Available from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unconference> [Accessed on 11 October 2010]

<sup>2</sup>*Mashed Library* [Online]. Available from: <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/> [Accessed on 28 August 2010]

<sup>3</sup>Wikipedia. *Mashup (web application hybrid)* [Online]. Available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup\\_%28web\\_application\\_hybrid%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup_%28web_application_hybrid%29) [Accessed on 11 October 2010]

<sup>4</sup>Stephens, O. (2008) Mashed Libraries? Would you be interested? *Overdue Ideas* [Online], 1 July. Available from: [http://www.meanboyfriend.com/overdue\\_ideas/](http://www.meanboyfriend.com/overdue_ideas/) [Accessed on 4 September 2010]

<sup>5</sup>*Mashed Library* [Online]. Available from: <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/> [Accessed on 28 August 2010]

Mashlib events are discussed, organised and publicised through the Mashed Library social networking site and wiki<sup>6</sup>. Use of social media (particularly Twitter, and often using the #mashlib hashtag<sup>7</sup>) amongst delegates is almost universal. Blogs are also used to raise interest and awareness, and external sponsorship is sought to keep delegate costs to a minimum.

It's not necessary to be an I.T. specialist to get something out of a Mashed Library event; techies and non-techies alike are welcome and many interesting ideas have arisen from conversations between librarians, programmers, students and others. That said, an interest in library technology is assumed, and a laptop or other portable device is *de rigueur*!

A few of the 'themes' that have been explored at past mashlib events include: using maps to explore library collections (Birmingham), open source library software (Edinburgh), the use of Radio-Frequency ID tags and QR codes (Huddersfield), and using Web2.0 services to campaign for public libraries (Lincoln).

For a comprehensive overview of library data mashups, see the 2009 book by library technology enthusiast Nicole C. Engard<sup>8</sup>, and its accompanying website<sup>9</sup>.

The most recent Mashed Library unconference, "Pancakes and Mash", took place on Shrove Tuesday, 8 March 2011, at the University of Lincoln. Details of future events, along with a mashlib event 'cookbook' for organisers, are available at: <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/>

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<sup>6</sup>*Mashed Library wiki* [Online]. Available from: <http://www.mashedlibrary.com/wiki/> [Accessed on 28 August 2010]

<sup>7</sup>*#mashlib - Twitter Search* [Online]. Available from: <http://search.twitter.com/search?q=%23mashlib> [Accessed on 1 August 2010]

<sup>8</sup>Engard, N.C. (2009) *Library mashups: exploring new ways to deliver library data*. London: Facet Publishing

<sup>9</sup>*Library Mashups* [Online]. Available from: <http://mashups.web2learning.net/> [Accessed on 11 October 2010]